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THESIS

LADY GREGORY  
AND HER INFLUENCE ON THE ABBEY THEATER

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(B.S. in Education, Boston University, 1932)

In partial fulfillment of requirements for the  
degree of Master of Education

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## Introduction

"How we rejoice, that thou would'st not remain,  
Beside thy hearth, bemoaning useless years,  
But hear'st with inner ear, the rhythmic strain,  
Of Ireland's mystic overburdened heart,  
Nor didst refuse to play the noble part." (1)

These words are part of an anonymous poem, dedicated to Lady Augusta Gregory, which appeared in the Chicago Daily Tribune in February, 1912. By her work as co-founder and director of the Abbey Theater she exerted a profound influence upon the development of Irish drama. It is the purpose of this thesis to show that, although she is considered one of the lesser dramatists of the Abbey theater movement, her influence upon it made her worthy of consideration and won for her an enduring place in the literature of Ireland.

On May 23, 1932, Lady Augusta Gregory died at her estate in Coole, County Galway. At her death Ireland mourned the passing of one of its most popular dramatists. She died at the advanced age of eighty and for the last forty years she had enjoyed a successful career as an internationally famous author and playwright. George Bernard Shaw had once called her "the greatest living

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 319.  
C.P. Putnam's Sons Co. 1913





Irishwoman."(1) Her most enduring work, however, and one of her greatest contributions to the culture of Ireland, was her assistance in the organization of a national theater. Without the influence of Lady Gregory the Abbey Theater might never have come into existence. Without her untiring zeal and her loyal support, it could never have weathered the storms of violent opposition which threatened to engulf it during the first few years of its life. In 1916 when Ireland was engaged in political strife and national drama had deserted the theater for the stage of real life, the future of the newly founded Abbey Theater looked dark indeed. But Lady Gregory with characteristic courage held fast to her ambition to keep the Irish drama alive. New plays were produced at intervals in spite of financial difficulties, and at any cost the theater was kept open.

Today the Abbey players are famous throughout the world. But the spirit of Lady Gregory, their pioneer, lives on, as will her popularity in the Irish drama for all time. Her work was too self-sacrificing and too internationally significant to be forgotten. More than any of the founders it may be said that "the Irish theater is hers and she made it."(2)

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 310.  
C.P.Putnam's Sons Co. 1913.

(2) Malone - The Irish Drama, p. 59.  
Charles Scribner's Sons, New York, 1929.



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Before Lady Gregory's influence upon the Irish drama movement can be fully understood and appreciated, some details should be presented concerning the need for national drama in Ireland during the 19th century.





## I. The Need For National Drama.

Although Ireland has one of the oldest civilizations in Europe with a culture and a literature which has continued almost without a break from pre-Christian times, it was not until the end of the 19th century that the literary movement known as the "Gaelic Renaissance" gave rise to a national drama. Ireland had reached a high state of culture when Greek and Roman drama was flourishing, yet it seemed wholly uninterested in any attempt to emulate the achievements of other nations. It seems strange indeed that a country with so ancient a culture did not attempt to give expression to its struggles, hopes, and achievements at an earlier date.

In the 18th century there began a revival of Anglo-Irish literature. As little by little English speech began making its way throughout the country, the old traditional Gaelic songs were written in English by travelling bards and harpers. Among these earlier poets was Sir Thomas Moore, who in his English versions of the old Gaelic songs unconsciously reproduced again and again the rhythm, and often the structure of the ancient Gaelic verse. Later, Dr. Douglas Hyde in his versions of folk poetry gathered from the peasants and fishermen of West Ireland, created a rhythmic, colored idiom which profoundly influenced the

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plays of Yeats, Synge, and Lady Gregory.

The revival of the ancient folk songs and poems, however, seemed to create no desire for national drama in Ireland. While in other European countries such as Greece and Rome the national songs and simple religious rites often developed into acted drama, in Ireland the song remained just a song and the singers just singers. The mass of Irish people were not interested in drama. However the spoken word was of the greatest importance. The fine work and dramatic manner of delivery resulted in the growth of a system which prevented, as much as any other single cause, the development of a distinctly national drama. This system consisted of the poetry recitals given in the homes, and the oral story tellings about the firesides. Gradually the readings and stories degenerated until at the end of the nineteenth century the public reading of the newspaper and the melodramatic speeches of politicians took the place of the earlier methods. Yet the emphasis upon the spoken word and the attention to manner and delivery left a deep impression upon the Irish mind, and when a national theater was finally organized, the actors soon became famous for their beauty of enunciation and their ease of manner.

The political struggles of Ireland have been given as a possible cause for the late development of Irish drama, yet historians would have us believe that the struggles





there were no more severe than in many other European countries where drama had reached its height. Without doubt, the famines, constant poverty, and repression of the masses did much to crush the spirit of the common people and to kill whatever might have resulted in creating a drama of Ireland. It took many years to overcome the suspicion and prejudice of the Irish peasants toward the national drama created for them by the nobility. Until very recently the Abbey players were better appreciated outside their own country.

Before the founding of the national theater, the Irish aristocracy and the more intellectual land owners supported a theater in the larger towns and cities but the standards were taken from London. Thus for several years Ireland gave the world dramatists but not drama. Had it not been for such artists as William Congreve, Richard Sheridan, Oscar Wilde, and George Bernard Shaw English comedy would have lost much of its savor, and that satiric content, perfection of dialogue, and true wit which are characteristic of the Irishman. Despite the talents of these dramatists, the theater in Ireland depended almost entirely upon the profit-making English actor-managers. Commercialism reigned supreme, the old Gaelic language was dying out, and the theater, from an artistic and creative standpoint, had hopelessly degenerated when the Scandinavian Theater Renaissance brought the plays of Ibsen before the world. Arguments



about his dramas aroused a new interest in the theater. Actor-managers had no place for his work, so societies were organized and new theaters were founded where new dramas might be presented to the world. As an outgrowth of this movement the Independent Theater was founded in London. Although it was an English organization its chief supporters were Irish and it produced the first plays of Yeats, Moore, and Shaw. Shaw soon became interested in championing the work of Ibsen in England, but Yeats, the poet and dreamer, began at once to hope for a National Theater where native Irish drama might be produced.

At this time in Ireland the Parnell controversy and the ceaseless political wranglings caused many of the younger intellectuals to turn from politics to literature. So general did the movement become that it marked roughly the beginning of the Irish Literary Renaissance. The founding of the Gaelic League, the purpose of which was to restore Irish as the spoken language of Ireland, struck a responsive chord in the Irish temperament,- a chord long ignored and neglected. A desperate effort was needed to rescue the ancient language from inevitable death. Irish literary societies were founded and through their "original nights" of lectures, discussions, and readings many new writers were discovered. William Butler Yeats was a sponsor of such societies, and Lady Gregory was a frequent attendant





at the "original nights."

Eventually the Irish Renaissance brought together three writers interested no less in creating a national drama for Ireland than in the revival of Irish literature. These three writers were William Butler Yeats, George Moore, and Edward Martyn; but it was Lady Gregory who brought them all together for the common endeavor of founding an Irish theater. She was the driving force of the movement, and her practical mind worked out a plan by which the dreams of Yeats, Moore, and Martyn became realities.



## II. The Founding of the Irish Theater

At the height of the Literary Renaissance, Lady Gregory was well known for her translations of Irish folk tales. She held a distinguished place in the literature of the time, and was affectionately called "the little godmother of poets and dramatists."<sup>(1)</sup> At her home in Coole, with its garden of the Seven Woods, many young Irish geniuses met, and here Moore, Yeats, and Synge were frequent visitors. Yeats says that he often went to her for advice, and in several of his books he pays tribute to her. He says: "Almost every story I have used or person I have spoken of, is in one or the other of Lady Gregory's 'Gods And Fighting Men' or 'Cuchulain Of Muirthemne.' If my present small Dublin audience for poetical drama grows and spreads beyond Dublin, I shall owe it to these two books, masterpieces of prose, which can but make the old stories as familiar to Irishmen everywhere as are the stories of Arthur and his knights to all readers of books."<sup>(2)</sup> In translating the old stories Lady Gregory visited the peasant home and the workhouse. She talked with the piper and the beggar on the road. She studied their common turn of a phrase, its heights, its humor,

(1) Literary Digest - June 11, 1932. v. 17.

(2) Chislett - Moderns And Near Moderns, v. 165.





its illogical twists, and its underflow of poetry. As she conversed, she jotted down in her notebook phrases which she later wove into her delightful comedies. Her "Kiltartan English" was an idiom created by her, and was closely allied to the peasant speech. It gave native flavor and distinction to all her work.

Until 1898 Lady Gregory, though closely allied with the Gaelic Renaissance, felt no particular interest in the theater. One day, however, while at tea in the home of a friend, she caught some of the enthusiasm of Yeats for a national theater. He interested her in his dream for "building a little theater somewhere in the suburbs to produce romantic drama."<sup>(1)</sup> This dream of an Irish theater lingered in Lady Gregory's mind for some time. Finally she reached a decision, and, although there was no theater and no money with which to finance one, she abandoned her other writing and gave her entire support to the movement for founding an Irish Theater. With Yates, Moore, and Edward Martyn a plan was made to collect money, take a Dublin theater, and give a performance of Martyn's "The Heather Field" and Yeats' "The Countess Cathleen." Lady Gregory composed a circular letter which was sent out. It asked for guarantees to the extent of thirty pounds. The letter stated that the purpose of the

(1) Malone - The Irish Drama, p. 34.



theater was to have "certain Celtic and Irish plays acted each year with the ambition of building an Irish school of dramatic literature." (1) This statement followed: "We will show that Ireland is not the home of buffoonery and of easy sentiment, as it has been represented, but the home of an ancient idealism. We are confident of the support of all Irish people who are weary of misrepresentation in carrying out a work that is outside all the political questions that divide us." (2) Actually the guarantors were never called upon to make any payment as Lady Gregory contributed a large sum and Mr. Martyn defrayed many of the initial expenses himself. However, the demonstrations of faith and support were very welcome, particularly at that time when there were so many personal animosities in Irish politics. One of Lady Gregory's most encouraging replies was from the aged poet, Aubrey De Vere. He said that he believed in the genius of Ireland and felt that those who had hastened that development in any way should have the everlasting gratitude of the people. Many persons to whom the circular letter was sent were unenthusiastic, some were discouraging, and a few expressed the fear that Irish drama could not be made to pay and that trying to found a theater was a great mistake..

Lady Gregory was quite undaunted by thoughts of

(1) Malone - The Irish Drama, p. 34.

(2) Malone - The Irish Drama, p. 35.



failure, and even when Yeats and Martyn went to Dublin to get a theater and found their efforts blocked, she did not lose courage. At that time in Dublin only large theaters were licensed and there was an act of parliament stating that there would be a fine of three hundred pounds for anyone who should give a performance in any unlicensed building. Lady Gregory had many friends in parliament and she set about at once to get a clause inserted in the act empowering the municipality to license halls when desirable. It took nearly a year of untiring effort on her part, but the clause was finally inserted, a hall was procured, and on May 8, 1899 the first performance was given in the Ancient Concert Rooms in Dublin. The plays given were "The Countess Cathleen" and "The Heather Field." The latter was well received, but "The Countess Cathleen" was severely criticised at first both by the clergy and by the lay people.

The next three years were stormy and discouraging for the founders of the new Little Theater. The actors were Irish but they were London trained, with the London theatrical standards. Because of the expense, plays were given only once a year though more than one play was usually given at a performance. During this time Martyn's "Tale of a Town" and Moore's "Bending of the Bough" were given. The heroic play, "Diarmuid And Grania" by Moore and Yeats was presented, and in 1901 was the event of the first production on any





stage of a play in the Irish language. It was Dr. Douglas Hyde's "Casad-an-Sugan" or "The Twisting Of The Rope." The principal part was taken by Dr. Hyde himself and the entire company was composed of Dublin actors. This was the last occasion in which English trained actors appeared in any plays of the new Irish theater. The time had come to present plays more often, and to train actors who would be truly Irish actors.

At this time in Dublin there were two brothers who were interested in acting. Both were talented amateurs, and both of them were discovered by Yeats who interested them in working with the newly-founded Irish theater. Frank Fay was interested in verse plays and William Fay had a genius for comedy. Under the direction of these two able brothers a school for acting developed. Both Lady Gregory and Yeats pay high tribute to Frank and William Fay. They and their small company of amateurs labored under most discouraging conditions. All of them worked at their regular occupations during the day, and had to rehearse at night. They were obliged to contend with small, cold halls, lack of dressing rooms, and scarcity of stage properties. Most of the scenery and stage effects were made and painted by hand. Paper maché, made by boiling down old programmes, was used for shields in the historic plays. Old sacking was dyed for curtains, and backgrounds were painted by Mr. Fay. From this humble



beginning grew a native school for acting - a real Irish dramatic company.

On April 2, 1902, the Irish National Dramatic Company presented "Deidre" and "Kathleen Ni Houlihan" in Dublin. This marked the beginning of the Irish National Theater. For the first time plays were written by Irish playwrights, acted by an Irish company, and staged by an Irish producer. The help and encouragement of Lady Gregory during the early struggles of this amateur company cannot be overestimated. She took her part in the management and direction of the company, did a great amount of publicity work and propaganda, and did her full share of preparation and rehearsal for the first performance.

In May, 1903, the Irish National Dramatic Society for the first time went to London. Since the actors were all amateurs they had to ask their employers for an entire Saturday holiday. They left Dublin Friday, played Saturday afternoon and evening, and returned Monday to work in Dublin. They gave five plays, one of which was Lady Gregory's "Twenty Five." In addition to her other labors for the theater she had taken up playwriting for it, not because she had any desire to do so, nor because she felt that she could compete in any way with the greatness of Yeats, but because there was need for comedy in the repertory of the theater and she decided to try to write comedy. The London trip, the first





of many, was a great success and the play "Twenty Five" was enthusiastically received.

At this time the National Dramatic Company was attracting the attention of the more wealthy theater patrons. A certain Miss Horniman who became interested in them gave them a whole building in Dublin which she arranged to have reconstructed and rebuilt. It became known as the Abbey Theater. Its use was free and there was an annual subsidy for a term of years. When these years had expired the Abbey players were no longer in need of financial assistance, but they have always felt greatly indebted to Miss Horniman for her timely aid. Before the Abbey Theater could be accepted as a recognized theater, however, it was necessary to get a patent from the Crown. It was a long and discouraging procedure, for there was considerable feeling still about the establishment of a truly Irish theater. The entire company had to appear at an inquiry held by the Privy Council. They were questioned and cross-questioned, and Yeats became very angry several times during the sessions. The little company would have become thoroughly discouraged if Lady Gregory had not cheered them all by her untiring efforts in their behalf and her lively sense of humor in the most trying situations. Finally the case was won, and the patent was granted to "Dame Augusta Gregory." (1)

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 42.



The establishment of the theater and the granting of the patent were two of the major problems happily solved. However, many others appeared as time went on and they were not always happily solved. Discord broke out inside the theater,- that breaking and rebuilding which must come to any organization. Lady Gregory heartily disliked discord but she was most earnest in her desire to arrange things for the good of all concerned. She once wrote Yeats, at a time of rare discouragement, "Grip is a good dog, but Hold Fast is better. There is in me some French blood which keeps my spirit up." (1) Yeats, answering a particularly discouraging letter, said, "Any fool can fight a winning battle, but it needs character to fight a losing one, and that should inspire us." (2) Fight a losing battle she did, for after five years of able managing, producing, and acting, the Fay brothers left the company at a time of disagreement and discouragement. Lady Gregory was most grieved and disappointed. She said, in tribute to them. "I am very sorry that they, who more than almost any others had laid the foundations of the Irish Theater, did not wait with us for its success." (3) She was troubled that her own countrymen did not accept the theater with more enthusiasm and she was saddened by the discord within its

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 47.

(2) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 48.

(3) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 46.

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ranks which caused many of the players to drop off. Yet with characteristic courage she wrote one day, in a letter to a friend, "It is always sad to lose fellow workers but the work must go on all the same. 'No man putting his hand to the plough and drawing back is fit for the kingdom of God.' I am going on with it as long as life and strength are left in me. It is hard to hold one's own against those one is living amongst - I have found that; and I have found that peace comes, not from trying to please one's neighbors, but in making up one's own mind what is the right path and in then keeping to it." (1)

It is small wonder then, that the name of Lady Augusta Gregory will live forever in the Irish drama. George Bernard Shaw sometimes referred to her as the "char-woman of the Abbey." (2) No personal sacrifice was too great for her to make in the interests of the theater, no task was too menial for her to perform for the good of the company. No opposition from without or discord from within could swerve her from her purpose - the establishment of a truly national drama for her native country.

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 49.

(2) The Literary Digest, June 11, 1932. p. 17.





### III. The Abbey Players in America.

In August 1911, the Abbey players were offered a contract in America. They accepted readily, for they had always been anxious to go to the United States. Lady Gregory went with them as their director and stage manager. She proved to be an invaluable friend, as well as an able manager. Liebler and Company, who offered the contract, mentioned as an essential play in the repertoire, Synge's "Playboy of the Western World." John Millington Synge was the real genius among the Abbey playwrights, yet this play of his had, from the beginning, caused storms of protest. In many theaters in Ireland there had been violent demonstrations against it. Lady Gregory was most courageous in disregarding the advice of her friends and including in the repertoire of these unknown Irish players making their first appearance in America, a play which depicted the lowly life of the Irish peasants with all the dramatic irony, artistic force, and deep emotion characteristic of Synge. In one of her first letters home Lady Gregory wrote of her dread in putting on "The Playboy." She said: "It is a strange fate that sends me into battle after my peaceful life for so many years, but one has to carry through one's job." (1)

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory. p. 244.  
C. P. Putnam's Sons Co. 1913



The first performance of the Abbey players in America was given at the Plymouth Theater in Boston. There was a large and enthusiastic audience present on the opening night. The first plays given were some of Lady Gregory's own delightful little comedies in which the Abbey players were always so successful. Lady Gregory said of this first audience: "I could not but feel moved when I saw them and I remembered our small beginnings with the years of effort and discouragement." (1) She found Boston a friendly place and spoke of finding many of her friends from Ireland there. The Boston intellectuals soon received this charming gentlewoman into their homes. She lectured to a large group on play-writing at the home of Mrs. Jack Gardner in the Fenway. She visited Dr. Baker's workshop at Harvard and learned, with satisfaction, that many of her own plays were being studied and read there.

Finally the time arrived for the first presentation of "The Playboy." Lady Gregory had heard of the organized opposition from Dublin which had reached America. The Gaelic American and other Irish newspapers made attacks upon "The Playboy" through their editorials. However, Boston opposition was slight compared with that in other parts of the country. What booing and hissing there was at the Plymouth Theater

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 173.  
C.P. Putnam's Sons Co. 1913.





soon became drowned by the cheers of the Harvard boys, who had read the criticisms and attacks, and proceeded to cheer loudly whenever there appeared a scene or speech which had been subject to newspaper attack. The mayor of Boston sent his secretary and the police commissioners sent their censor to report on the play. Both reported that there was nothing in the performance to justify the elimination of any part of it. Mr. Leahy, the mayor's secretary, felt that "The Playboy" and the other peasant plays were artistic, wonderfully acted, and should cause no offense to the patriotic Irishman. He said: "I regret the sensitiveness that makes certain men censor them. Knowing what Mr. Yeats and Lady Gregory want to do, I cannot hope but they succeed and that they are loyally supported in America. My commendation cannot be expressed too forcibly." (1) Mary Boyle O'Reilly wrote in one of her articles: "By their fine art the players have dealt a death blow to the coarse and stupid burlesque of the traditional stage Irishman who has for years outraged every man and woman of Celtic ancestry by gorilla-like buffoonery and grotesque attempts at brogue." (2)

It was with much regret that the Abbey players said farewell to Boston and started on their tour of the larger

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 181.  
(2) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 317.

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and activities. It emphasizes that this is essential for ensuring transparency and accountability in the organization's operations.

2. The second part outlines the various methods and tools used to collect and analyze data. This includes both traditional manual methods and modern digital technologies, highlighting the benefits of each approach.

3. The third part focuses on the role of the management team in overseeing the data collection process. It stresses the need for clear communication and coordination between different departments to ensure that data is collected consistently and accurately.

4. The fourth part discusses the challenges faced during the data collection process, such as incomplete data or discrepancies between different sources. It provides strategies to address these challenges and ensure the integrity of the data.

5. The fifth part concludes by summarizing the key findings and recommendations. It reiterates the importance of a systematic and transparent approach to data collection and analysis, and encourages ongoing monitoring and improvement of the process.

cities in the United States. Of her last matinee in Boston Lady Gregory said: "I brought home the impressions of that kind, crowded audience and the knowledge that having come among strangers we left real friends."<sup>(1)</sup> Although all the other plays in the repertoire were received favorably, there was violent opposition to "The Playboy" in almost every city in which the players appeared. The attacks were deliberate and seemed to come from the Irish people themselves through organizations such as The Clan Na Gael." The feeling on the part of the majority was that "The Playboy" was a deliberate attempt to depict only the lowest and most degrading aspects of Irish life. Such, of course, was not the case. Lady Gregory felt, with Synge, that drama was life, and that the dignity of a country was in no way lessened by showing upon the stage some typical countrymen who drank, swore, were covetous, miserly, or performed violent deeds. Through all the trials and difficulties in her own country and in America, Lady Gregory clung to the hope that in time this new school of drama would overcome the violent opposition which it had at first aroused. She lived to see her hopes realized and to hear the Abbey players acclaimed in England, Ireland, and America.

In Philadelphia opposition to "The Playboy" was

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 183.  
C.P. Putnam's Sons Co. 1913



so strong that the entire cast was arrested and brought before a magistrate. When warned of the impending arrest if "The Playboy" was given, Lady Gregory remarked, with characteristic spirit, that both Bunyan and Oscar Wilde had produced a very great work in prison and she hoped that she might be able to spend her time there profitably. She also said: "I would rather go to my death than give in."<sup>(1)</sup>

The play went on before a packed house. The arrest the next day resulted only in publicity for the company and sympathy from friends. In New York and Providence there was much opposition, and often deliberate attempts were made to disrupt the play. In an interview in the New York Dramatic Mirror Lady Gregory said: "I suppose that London thinks the premiere of "The Playboy" in New York was a repetition of the Boston Massacre. I spent the time kneeling in the wings, telling them to go on with the play but to save their voices, because they'd have to do it over. As I wasn't hit, I can't complain, only I hope they will boil the potatoes next time."<sup>(1)</sup>

In New Haven the reception was more cordial, and Lady Gregory was happy to know that Synge's dramas and other Abbey plays were being used at Yale in the English literature courses. She lectured at Vassar, Smith, and Bryn Mawr, and gave suggestions to the students there concerning the presentation

(1) New York Dramatic Mirror, December 27, 1911, p. 5.





of some of her comedies.

In Washington there was both praise for, and opposition to, the plays, regardless of the nationality or religion of the audiences. Lady Gregory found in Theodore Roosevelt an enthusiastic friend and a staunch admirer. He attended every performance at which he expected to find any disturbance. Lady Gregory once told him, jokingly, that she felt he enjoyed being in the midst of a fight. He replied with characteristic fervor that he did enjoy a fight, but that he particularly admired the courage of these Abbey players, and enjoyed the artistry of their acting. He said the plays were vital, human, and appealed to all mankind. He felt that although they were written by Irishmen for Ireland they were about people with national interests and traditions, and therefore they were written for mankind.

In March, 1912, the Abbey players sailed for Ireland at the end of a most successful American tour. The intellectual element accepted them and their plays wholeheartedly, and many of the Irish people who so violently opposed them at first were beginning to be won over. Just before Lady Gregory and her players sailed, this poem appeared in the Chicago Daily Tribune:



"Still mayest thou the battle royal wage,  
To show a people to itself, to gauge  
The depth and quality peculiar there,  
Of its humanity to catch the air,  
And croon its plaintiveness upon the stage."(1)

In December of the following year the Abbey players again visited the United States. This time they were received everywhere most cordially, and today American audiences look forward to a visit from the Abbey Theater players.

When Lady Gregory died, the Literary Digest made this comment concerning her fight to have "The Playboy" accepted in the United States. "Lady Gregory brought to America Synge's "The Playboy" a chief jewel in the crown she had helped to put upon the head of Ireland."(2)

(1) Our Irish Theater - Lady Gregory, p. 319.  
(2) The Literary Digest, May 1932, p. 17.

# THE HISTORY OF THE CITY OF BOSTON

FROM THE FIRST SETTLEMENT  
TO THE PRESENT TIME  
BY  
JOSEPH NEALE, ESQ.  
OF THE BARR



#### IV. Lady Gregory's Comedies

In the preceding chapters, the founding of the Abbey Theater and Lady Gregory's influence upon it have been presented in some detail. In the concluding chapters she will be discussed as a playwright and some of her plays will be briefly presented and analyzed.

Lady Gregory is best remembered as a writer of short comedies for the Abbey Theater. In spite of her somewhat successful experimentation in other types of plays such as folk history and tragedy, her comedies are the plays which have endured. The popularity of her one-act comedies is almost phenomenal. They are performed two and three times as often as those of any other playwright in the Abbey Theater. Boyd<sup>(1)</sup> says that in 1912 sixteen performances of "The Rising of The Moon" were given against three of Synge's "The Playboy." The farce "Coats" was produced no less than twelve times during a season. Malone<sup>(2)</sup> says, "Comedy is the path to popularity if it be not always the path to great art. Audiences want to laugh, and go to the theater for that purpose. In Ireland Lady Gregory has produced the greatest laugh for the greatest number." Her

(1) Boyd, Ernest A.: The Contemporary Drama of Ireland, p. 137.

(2) Malone, Andrew: The Irish Drama, p. 156.



chief gift was her faculty for dialogue. In it is found vivid imagination and vast absurdity. She possessed a delightfully puckish fancy which could conceive charming absurdity of character and incident. Her use of the dialect of her own peasantry gave her comedies their finest setting in English. There is real humor akin to farce in her rollicking stage Irishman. He is not presented malevolently or maliciously as was the Irishman in the English play. He is a jolly, simple fellow without guile or subtlety. Her characters, the bewildered peasantry, are unlike anything in literature or in life, for they are products of a rich humanity and a keen sense of the ridiculous. Lady Gregory said that she found it easier "to laugh at the fool than laugh with the wise."<sup>(1)</sup> She frequently confuses comedy with farce in her plays. Malone<sup>(1)</sup> says in defining the two: "Comedy is the humor of character and farce is the humor of situation." "John Bull's Other Island" is a comedy because its humor springs from the contact of personalities. Lady Gregory's "Spreading The News" is farce because its whole structure depends on Mrs. Tarpey's deafness." In "Hyacinth Halvey," "The Jackdaw," and "The Workhouse Ward" the entire comedy is built around one absurd situation in each play. She loves broad situations and characters sketched in bold

(1) Malone, Andrew: The Irish Drama, p. 157.



lines. Her characters, though real, seem amusing rather than enduring. Beneath the fun and frolic of Lady Gregory's comedies there often lies keen satire and dramatic irony. Particularly is this true in some of her political plays such as "The Deliverer," "The White Cockade," and "The Canavans." Although her irony is without the sinister quality which dominates Synge's work, it is present in her humor and is never far from her pathos.

#### The Workhouse Ward

In her short farce "The Workhouse Ward" the tendency to quarrel is satirized. The plot is simple, as are the plots in most of Lady Gregory's short comedies. The dialogue, which is the play's strongest point, is humorous, lively, and full of keen satire. The characters consist of two paupers, Mike McInerney, Michael Miskell, and Mrs. Donohoe, a country woman. The scene is laid in a ward in a Cloon workhouse. The two old men are in their beds as the play opens:(1)

Michael Miskell: "Isn't it a hard case, Mike McInerney, myself and yourself to be left here in the bed and it the feast day of Saint Colman and the rest of the ward attending on mass?"

(1) Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C. P. Putnam's Sons, p.137.





Mike McInerney: "Is it sitting by the hearth you are wishful to be Michael Miskrell, with cold shoulders and with speckled shins? Let you rise up, so, and you will be able to do it not like myself that has pains the same as tin tacks within my inside."

The two old men at once start quarelling violently. They recall their early manhood days outside the workhouse and accuse each other of theft, deceit, and all manner of petty crimes. They make a wish never to be together again even in death.

Mike McInerney: "I would request nine furrows of field, nine ridges of the hills, nine waves of the ocean to be put between your grave and my own grave the time we will be laid in the ground."

Michael miskell: "Amen to that, nine ridges is it? No, but let the whole ridge of the world separate us till the Day of Judgment! I would not be laid anear you at the Seven Churches, I to get Ireland without a divide."



The quarrel continues until one of the paupers sits up in bed and threatens to choke the other. They are shaking their fists as Mrs. Donohoe comes into the ward with a parcel. She goes to Mike McInerney, her brother whom she has not seen for many years, and offers to take him out of the workhouse to live with her in her home. She explains that her husband has just died and has left her alone in her cottage. At first Mike is delighted with the prospects of leaving the workhouse and sits up to try on the clothes she has brought in the parcel. However, Michael Miskell becomes greatly alarmed and begs his friend to stay with him.

Michael Miskell: "All that I am craving is the talk. There is to be no one at all to say out to whatever thought might be rising in my innate mind. To be lying here and no conversible person in it would be the abomination of misery."

Mike McInerney is moved to pity and begs Mrs. Donohoe to take them both with her. She refuses and reminds them of the quarrelling she heard as she entered the ward.

Mrs. Donohoe: "For pity's sake! Michael Miskell is it? That's worse again. Yourself and Mike that never left fighting and scolding and attacking one





another! Sparring at one another like two young pups you were, and threatening one another after like two grown dogs!"

Mike McInerney: "All the quarrelling was ever in the place it was myself did it. Sure his anger rides fast and goes away like the wind. Bring him out with myself now, Honor Donohoe, and God bless you!"

Mrs. Donohoe refuses to bring both men out and so Michael refuses to stir from the ward. Mrs. Donohoe goes out in disgust. For a moment after she is gone the two old men remain silent. However, they have hardly spoken a sentence before they start quarrelling again, and as the curtain falls they are sitting up in bed throwing pillows at one another.

Mike McInerney: "By cripes! I'll pull out your pin feathers!"

Michael Miskell: "You tyrant! You big bully you!"

Mike McInerney: (Throwing pillows and seizing mug,  
"Take this so, you stobbing ruffian  
you!"

CURTAIN

1. The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions and the role of the accounting department in ensuring the integrity of the financial statements.

2. It also highlights the need for regular audits and the importance of having a strong internal control system in place to prevent fraud and errors.

3. The second part of the document provides a detailed overview of the company's financial performance over the past year, including a breakdown of revenue, expenses, and profit.

4. It also includes a comparison of the company's performance to industry benchmarks and a discussion of the factors that have contributed to its success or challenges.

5. The third part of the document outlines the company's financial goals for the upcoming year and the strategies that will be implemented to achieve them.

6. It also includes a discussion of the risks associated with these goals and the measures that will be taken to mitigate them.

7. The fourth part of the document provides a summary of the key findings of the audit and the recommendations for improvement.

8. It also includes a discussion of the steps that will be taken to implement these recommendations and the timeline for completion.

9. The fifth part of the document provides a final summary of the document and a statement of the auditor's opinion on the company's financial statements.

10. It also includes a discussion of the limitations of the audit and the scope of the work performed.

Lady Gregory says in her notes on "The Workhouse Ward" that she got the idea for this farce-comedy when she visited the Cloom workhouse. She says: "I sometimes think the two scolding paupers are a symbol of ourselves in Ireland. It is better to be quarrelling than to be lonesome." (1) This political satire was probably too obscure to be appreciated by the average audience but the play as a short farce-comedy was very popular. The dialogue, written in Lady Gregory's well known "Kiltartan English" is clever, crisp, and pleasant. The play's chief weakness is that its structure is extremely thin and it consists mainly of talk. Dramatic critics are agreed that talk alone never makes a great and seldom makes a good play.

#### The Rising of the Moon

This is one of Lady Gregory's most popular and enduring comedies. It differs from "The Workhouse Ward" in that its theme is political and its dramatic technique is far more masterly. It is strongly flavored with political interest and conveys the idea that those who appear to be against the struggle for Irish liberty are really for it. The Sergeant's choice is handled by Lady Gregory with great artistry. The scene of the play is the side of a quay in a

(1) Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C. P. Putnam's Sons. p.199.



seaport town. The moonlight shines on the water but the steps leading down to it are in darkness. In the shadows there is a large barrel. Three policemen enter. One, the Sergeant, is older than the others. He crosses the stage and looks down the steps into the water. The others put down a paste pot and unroll a bundle of placards. They finally decide to put one on the barrel. The placard describes a political prisoner who has made his escape from gaol and from whom the police are searching. The reward for his capture is one hundred pounds.

(1) Sergeant: (Reading the placard) "Dark hair - dark eyes - smooth face, height five feet five - there's not much to take hold of in that. It's a pity I had no chance of seeing him before he broke out of gaol. They say he's a wonder, that its he makes the plans for the whole organization. There isn't another man in Ireland would have broken gaol the way he did. He must have some friends among the goalers.

Policeman B: "A hundred pounds is little enough for the government to offer for him. You may be sure any man in the force that takes him will get promotion.





Sergeant: "Ill mind this place myself. I wouldnt wonder at all if he came this way. He might come slipping along - there (points to side of quay) and his friends might be waiting for him there (points down steps) and once he got away its little chance we'd have of finding him."

Policeman X: "And if we get him itself nothing but abuse on our heads for it from the people and maybe from our own relation."

Sergeant: "Well, we have to do our duty in the force. Haven't we the whole country depending on us to keep law and order? Its those that are down would be up and those that are up would be down if it wasn't for us. Well, hurry on, you have plenty of other places to placard yet and come back here to me. You can take the lantern. Don't be too long now. Its very lonesome here with nothing but the moon."

The other policemen exit with the final remark: "Well good luck to your watch." The sergeant, left alone walks up and down talking to himself of the reward. Suddenly, a ragged man appears at the left, and tries to



slip past. The Sergeant turns and stops him. The stranger says he is a ballad singer who has come to sell his ballads to sailors. The Sergeant is suspicious but listens to the singing of some of the ballads. The ragged man tells the Sergeant that he knows the prisoner who is being sought. They discuss the fugitive quite freely. The night is very still, and at every slight sound the Sergeant grows tense and listens.

Sergeant: "Oh! (gasps) What's that?"

Man: (Jumps off barrel and listens looking out at the water)

"Its nothing Sergeant."

Sargeant: "I thought it might be a boat. I had a notion there might be a friend of his coming about the quays with a boat."

Man: "Sergeant, I am thinking it was with the people you were and not with the law you were, when you were a young man."

Sergeant: "Well, if I was foolish then, that time is gone."

Man: "Maybe, Sergeant, it comes into your head sometimes in spite of your belt and your tunic that it might have been as well for you to have followed Granuaile."

Sergeant: "Its no business of yours what I think."



Man: "Maybe, Sergeant, you'll be on the side  
of the country yet."

Sergeant: (Gets off barrel) "Don't talk to me like that.  
I have my duties and I know them.  
(Looks around). That was boat. I hear  
the oars." (Goes to steps and looks  
down.)

Man: (Sings) "Oh then tell me Shawn O'Farrell,  
Where the gathering is to be  
In the old spot by the river  
Right well known to you and me!"

Sergeant: "Stop that! Stop that, I tell you."

Man: (Sings louder) "One more word for signal then,  
Whistle up the marching tune,  
With your pike upon your shoulder,  
At the rising of the moon."

Sergeant: "If you don't stop that I'll arrest you."  
(A whistle from below answers, repeating  
the air.,

Sergeant: "That's a signal - you must not pass.  
Who are you? You are no ballad singer."

Man: "You needn't ask who I am - that placard  
will tell you."

The man takes off his hat and wig and the Sergeant





seizes them. The man tells the Sergeant that a friend of his is waiting below in a boat to take him to safety. He asks the Sergeant, as a friend of Granuaile, to let him pass.

Sergeant: "I am in the force. I will not  
let you pass."

Just then the voices of two policemen are heard outside.

Sergeant: "It's my comrades coming."

Man: "You won't betray me - the friend of  
Granuaile." (slips behind barrel.)

There is a moment of suspense as the two policemen enter and ask the Sergeant if anyone has come this way. The Sergeant says that he has seen no one at all, and tells the policemen to be off with their lantern. As they go out the Man comes from behind the barrel. He and the Sergeant stand looking at one another.

Sergeant: "What are you waiting for?"

Man: "For my hat, of course, and my wig."

The Sergeant gives them, and the Man going toward the steps says:

"Well, good-night, comrade, and  
thank you. You did me a good turn  
tonight, and I'm obliged to you.  
Maybe I'll be able to do as much



for you when the small rise up and  
the big fall down. . .when we all  
change places at the Rising (waves  
his hand and disappears) of the  
Moon."

Sergeant: (Turning his back to audience and reading  
placard: "A hundred pounds (Turns toward  
audience) I wonder, now am I as  
great a fool as I think I am?

CURTAIN

Some critics have called this little play a master-  
piece of dramatic technique. There is delicate artistry in  
the Sergeant's conflict with himself, as the ballad singer  
arouses his latent patriotism. The audience or the reader  
feel keenly the strong emotions of the man, who in spite of  
his belt and tunic should have followed the Granuaile. The  
language of the play is delightful and is full of the twists  
and turns and rhythm of Irish speech. The popularity of  
this play in the Abbey Theater repertoire is not surprising.



Spreading the News

This is one of Lady Gregory's lightest, most amusing comedies. It is founded on an absurd situation, but the characters, as they are sketched, are very true to Ireland. It was Lady Gregory's intention that even this little farce-comedy should have its lesson - that of rumor's wild riot in Irish crowds. In her notes she says:<sup>(1)</sup> "The idea of this play first came to me as a tragedy. I kept seeing, as in a picture, people sitting by the roadside and a girl passing to market gay and fearless. And then I saw her passing the same place at evening, her head hanging, the heads of others turned from her, because of some sudden story that had risen out of a chance word, and had snatched away her good name. But comedy and not tragedy was wanted at our theater to put beside the high poetic work, and I let laughter have its little way with the play."

The scene is laid on the outskirts of a Fair. There is an apple stall and in it sits deaf Mrs. Tarpey. A magistrate and a policeman enter. At once the laughter begins, for the dialogue is clever and witty. The new magistrate reveals himself as a pompous individual, while the policeman is, as Mrs. Tarpey expresses it, "showing off to the new magistrate."

(1) Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C.P.Putnam's Sons, n.196.





Magistrate: "So that is the Fair Green. Cattle and sheep and mud. No system. what a repulsive sight."

Policeman: "That is so, indeed."

Magistrate: "I suppose there is a good deal of disorder in this place."

Policeman: "There is."

Magistrate: "Common assault?"

Policeman: "It's common enough."

Magistrate: "Agrarian crime, no doubt?"

Policeman: "That is so."

Magistrate: "Boycotting? Maiming of cattle? Firing into houses?"

Policeman: "There was one time, and there might be again."

Magistrate: "That is bad. Does it go any farther than that?"

Policeman: "Far enough, indeed."

Magistrate: "Homicide, then! This district has been shamefully neglected! I will change all that. When I was in the Andaman Islands, my system never failed. Yes, yes, I will change all that. What has that woman on her stall?"

Policeman: "Apples mostly - and sweets."

Magistrate: "Just see if there are any unlicensed goods



underneath - spirits or the like. We had evasions of the salt tax in the Andaman Islands."

Policeman: (Sniffing cautiously and upsetting a heap of apples) "I see no spirits here - or salt."

Mrs. Tarpey is greatly angered by the disturbance of her stall, and when the magistrate asks her if she knows the town well she does not understand, and he and the policeman have to shout the questions at her several times. Finally she replies:

Mrs. Tarpey: (Rising and ducking) "Do I know the town? I do, to be sure."

Magistrate: (Shouting) "What is its chief business?"

Mrs. Tarpey: "Business, is it? What business would the people here have but to minding one another's business?"

Magistrate: "I mean what trade have they?"

Mrs. Tarpey: "Not a trade. No trade at all but to be talking."

Magistrate: "I shall learn nothing here."

As the policeman and magistrate go out, Bartley Fallon and his wife enter. It may be seen at once that he is what Lady Gregory intended him to be:- "silly, dull-witted, and ignorant."<sup>(1)</sup>

Mrs. Tarpey: (Turns and sees them) "Good morrow, Bartley

(1) Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C.P. Putnam's Sons, p. 196.



Fallon: Good morrow, Mrs. Fallon. Well, Bartley, you'll find no cause for complaining today; they are all saying it was a good fair."

Bartley (Raising his voice) "It was not a good fair, Mrs. Tarpey. It was a scattered sort of a fair. If we didn't expect more, we got less. That's the way with me always; whatever I have to buy goes up. If there's ever any misfortune coming to this world it's on myself it pitches, like a flock of crows on seed potatoes."

Mrs. Fallon: "Leave off talking of misfortunes and listen to Jack Smith that is coming the way, and he singing."

(Jack Smith comes in. He is a red-haired man and is carrying a hayfork.)

Mrs. Tarpey: "That should be a good song if I had my hearing."

Mrs. Fallon: (shouting) "It's 'The Red-haired Man's Wife.'"

Mrs. Tarpey: "I know it well. That's the song that has a skin on it."

From this point on the plot of the play becomes more and more complicated and ridiculous. Jack Smith, laying his hayfork on the grass while he lights his pipe and talks, goes out and





leaves the fork. Mrs. Fallon sees it.

Mrs. Fallon: "Look at there, Jack Smith's hayfork he left after him. He'll be wanting it." (Calls)  
"Jack Smith! Jack Smith! He's gone through the crowd. Hurry after him Bartley, he'll be wanting it."

Bartley: "I'll do that. This is no safe place to be leaving it." (He takes up the fork awkwardly and upsets the basket) "Look at that now! If there is any basket in the fair upset it must be our own basket."

(He goes out and another character, Tim Casey, enters.)

Tim Casey: "Where is Bartley Fallon? I want a word with him before he'll leave the fair."

Mrs. Fallon: "Where is he, is it? He's gone up the road. (Jerks elbow) following Jack Smith with a hayfork."

Mrs. Fallon goes out.

Tim Casey: "Following Jack Smith with a hayfork! Did you here that news, Mrs. Tarpey?"

Mrs. Tarpey: "I heard no news at all."

Tim Casey: "Some dispute I suppose it was that rose between Jack Smith and Bartley Fallon, and it seems Jack made off and Bartley is following him with a hayfork."



Mrs. Tarpey: "Is he now? Well, that was quick work!  
It's not ten minutes since the two of  
them were here, Bartley going home and  
Jack going to the Five Acre Meadow."

The news that Jack and Bartley Fallon have quarreled travels from one to another. Finally some one suggests that the magistrate and policeman come to the fair because of the quarrel. Rumor grows until Shawn Early suggests that Bartley Fallon has injured Jack Smith.

Mrs. Tully: "Why wouldn't he injure him? There  
was many a man killed with no more of  
a weapon than a hayfork."

The news soon spreads that a murder has been committed. Not content with murder, the gossips invent, as a motive, Bartley Fallon's desire for Jack Smith's wife. "He must be planning to elope with her to America," say the gossips, "or he would never do away with Jack Smith." Mrs. Tarpey's deafness complicates the plot because each bit of news becomes exaggerated for her and as she repeats it, it takes on an entirely new and more sinister form. Mrs. Fallon returns and tries to defend her husband from the wild rumors. She is unsuccessful and becomes greatly excited and angered. Finally the magistrate and Policeman come in.

Magistrate: "I knew the district was in a bad  
state but I did not expect to be



confronted with a murder at the first fair I came to."

Policeman: "I am sure you did not, indeed.

Magistrate: "It was well I had not gone home. I caught a few words here and there that roused my suspicions.

In the meantime, Bartley Fallon has entered with the hayfork. Hearing all the confusion he sits down, bewildered.

Magistrate: "What is that man doing? He is sitting alone with a hayfork. He has a guilty look. The murder was done with a hayfork."

Policeman: (In a whisper, "That's the very man they say did the act. Bartley Fallon himself!"

Magistrate: "He must have found escape difficult - he is trying to brazen it out. Stand aside - don't go far - have the handcuffs ready."

He walks up to Bartley, folds his arms in an important fashion and asks him if he knows John Smith. The dull-witted Bartley, entirely innocent and completely bewildered, involves himself in every speech he makes. This scene between Bartley and the magistrate is one of the most comic and ridiculous of all the scenes in the play. Bartley is accused of committing murder for the sake of Jack Smith's wife. The handcuffs are put on





him.

Bartley: "Handcuffs, now! Glory be! I always said if there was ever any misfortune coming to this place it was on myself it would fall. I to be in handcuffs! There's no wonder at all in that."

Mrs. Fallon enters and sees her husband in handcuffs.

Mrs. Fallon: "What in the earthly world do I see before me? Bartley Fallon in charge of the police! Handcuffs on him! O Bartley what did you do at all?"

When the magistrate explains that he has been arrested for the murder of Jack Smith and that the motive was love of Jack Smith's wife Mrs. Fallon becomes more infuriated than ever.

Mrs. Fallon; "And if it was for any sort of a fine, handsome woman, but for a little fistful of a woman, that's not four feet high hardly and not three teeth in her head unless she got new ones! May God reward you, Bartley Fallon, for the black treachery in your heart and the wickedness in your mind, and the red blood of poor Jack Smith that is wet upon your hand!"

At this moment the voice of Jack Smith is heard singing. As



he enters, the little crowd of people fall back crying that they have seen a ghost. Mrs. Fallon finally finds her voice and speaks:

Mrs. Fallon: "Dead or alive, let you stop your wife from bringing my man away with her to America!"

Jack Smith: "The wits are gone astray on the whole of you. What would my wife want bringing Bartley Fallon to America? I'll break the head of any man that says that! Who is it says it? (To Tim Casey) Was it you said it? (To Shawn Early) Was it you?"

All together (pointing to Bartley) "It was him that said it!"

Jack Smith: "Let me at him till I break his head!"

Bartley backs in terror. Neighbors hold Jack Smith back)

Jack Smith: (Trying to free himself) "Let me at him! Isn't he the pleasant sort of a scarecrow for any woman to be crossing the ocean with! Let me at him, can't you?" (Makes another rush but is held back.)

Magistrate: "We must take both these men to the scene of the murder. We must confront them with the body of the real Jack Smith.

Jack Smith: "Ill break the head of any man will find my dead body!"

1. The first part of the report deals with the general situation of the country and the results of the survey.

2. The second part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different regions.

3. The third part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different sectors.

4. The fourth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different groups.

5. The fifth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different periods.

6. The sixth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different countries.

7. The seventh part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different years.

8. The eighth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different months.

9. The ninth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different days.

10. The tenth part of the report deals with the results of the survey in the different hours.

Bartley: "It is what I am thinking if myself and Jack Smith are put together in the one cell for the night, the handcuffs will be taken off him, and his hands will be free, and murder will be done that time surely!"

Magistrate: "Come on." (They exit at right)

CURTAIN

This little play is a farce indeed. From the start there is scarcely a speech which does not call forth hearty laughter. Lady Gregory's farce technique is masterful, and her peasant characters are racy of the soil. Their speeches are full of the picturesque quirks of expression and homely phrases so characteristic of the English of the Irish. Although the plot is thin and the entire play is woven around one absurd incident, she has created in Bartley Fallon an amusing puppet with possibilities of a complete character portrayal. The critics have never fully understood why Lady Gregory left the writing of short comedies for experimentation in other fields. Her own explanation has never completely satisfied those who believe that she should have written only comedy. The presentation of "Spreading the News" by the Abbey players must be as welcome to audiences today as it was when the Abbey Theater first presented it. Every audience enjoys rollicking fun and hearty laughter, and there are laughs aplenty in "Spreading the News."





Hyacinth Halvey

The plot of this little comedy is somewhat less complicated than is the plot of "Spreading the News." However, it is full of frolic, and contains much that is absurd and ridiculous. The theme is best stated in Lady Gregory's own words: "Character is built up or destroyed by a passion or by an emotion, rather than by experience and deliberation."<sup>(1)</sup> The play is the story of Hyacinth Halvey, the young man who tried in vain to get rid of his good reputation.

The scene of the play is the outside of the post office in the little town of Cloon. Mrs. Delane, the post-mistress, is at the door. Mr. Quirke, the butcher, is sitting at the door of his shop nearby. A dead sheep hangs beside the entrance of the butcher shop. Fardy Farrell, the ne'er-do-well errand lad, is playing on a mouth organ. A train whistle is heard.

Mrs. Delane: "There's the four o'clock train, Mr. Quirke."

Mr. Quirke: "Is it now, Mrs. Delane, and I not long after rising? It makes a man drowsy to be doing half of his work in the night time."

Mrs. Delane: "I suppose so. It's hard enough on

(1)Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C.P.Putnam's Sons, p. 197.



myself to be down ready for the mail car in the morning, sorting letters in the half dark. It's often I haven't time to look who are the letters from - or the cards."

Mr. Quirke: "It would be a pity you not to know any little news might be knocking about. Was it you, ma'am was telling me that the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector would be arriving today?"

Mrs. Delane: "Today it is he is coming, and it's likely he was in that train. There was a card about him to Sergeant Carden this morning."

Mr. Quirke: "A young chap from Carrow they were saying he was."

Mrs. Deland: "So he is, one Hyacinth malvey:and indeed if all that is said of him is true, or if a quarter of it is true, he will be a credit to this town."

Mr. Quirke: "Is that so?"

Mrs. Delane: "Testimonials he has by the score. To Father Gregan they were sent. Registered they were coming and going. Would you believe me telling you they weighed up to three pounds?"

Mr. Quirke: "There must be great bulk in them indeed."

Mrs. Delane: "It is no wonder he to get the job. He must have a great character so many persons to



write for him as what there did."

Fardy: "It would be a great thing to have a character like that."

Mrs. Delane: "Indeed I am thinking it will be long before you will get the like of it, Fardy Farrell."

Just then Miss Joyce, the priest's housekeeper, enters. She is soon followed by the Sergeant. He carries a placard announcing a meeting to be held that evening at the Courthouse. The lecture is sponsored by the Department of Agriculture and is to further the moral development of the rural classes.

Sergeant: (Reads)"A lecture will be given this evening in Cloon Courthouse, illustrated by magic lantern slides'- Those will not be in it. I am told they were broken in the first journey, the railway company taking them to be eggs. The subject of the lecture is 'The Building of Character.'"

Mrs. Delane: "Very nice indeed. I knew a girl lost her character, and she washed her feet in a blessed well after and it dried up on the minute."

Miss Joyce: "Who is this coming up the street, Mrs. Delane?"

Mrs. Delane: "I wouldn't doubt it to be the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector. Indeed he must be a





very saintly young man."

(Enter Hyacinth Halvey. He carries a small bag and a parcel. He stops and nods bashfully..

Hyacinth: "Good evening to you. I was bid to come to the post-office -"

Sergeant: "I suppose you are Hyacinthe Halvey? I had a letter about you from the Resident Magistrate."

The Sergeant asks to see Hyacinth's testimonials. He opens a parcel and a large number of envelopes fall out.

Sergeant:(Opening and reading one by one) "He posses the fire of the Gael, the strength of the Norman, the vigour of the Dane, the stolidity of the Saxon -"

Hyacinth: "It was the Chairman of the Poor Law Guardians wrote that."

The Sergeant reads several testimonials all of which praise Hyacinth Halvey on the most glowing terms. Finally he decides that the new Sub-Sanitary Inspector is just the one to come to the evening lecture and stand up on the stage as a living proof of the beneficial effect of a high character. Hyacinth Halvey is embarrassed.

Hyacinth: "I am in no way wishful to be an example -

Sergeant: "I know what I'll do. I'll engage a few corner-boys from Noonan's bar, just as



they are, greasy and sodden, to stand in a group- there will be the contrast. The sight will deter others from a similar fate. That's the way to do a tableau. I knew I could turn out a success."

Hyacinth: "I wouldn't like to be a contrast -"

However, the Sergeant goes off intend on his purpose, Hyacinth feebly trying to detain him. Miss Joyce and Mrs. Deland ask Mr. Halvey if he has found lodging. When he replies that he has not, they suggest a room in a house opposite the priest's house. They infer that two different lodgers have had to leave the place because their characters were not of the best. Hyacinth, they explain, will be a most exemplary lodger.

Hyacinth: "I give you my work I'm not so harmless as you think.

Mrs. Deland: "I know well the way you will be spending the evening - writing letters to your relations -

Miss Joyce: "Reading the Catholic Young Man; looking at the pictures in the Lives of the Saints. I'll hurry on and engage the room for you."

As she goes out, Mrs. Delane and Mr. Quirke go inside.

Hyacinth turns to Fardy.

Hyacinth: (In a tone of agony) "I wish I had never seen Cloon."



Fardy: "What is on you?"

Hyacinth: I wish I had never left Carrow. I wish I had been drowned the first day I thought of it, and I'd be better off."

Fardy: "What is it ails you?"

Hyacinth: "To have left Carrow, if it was a poor place, where I had my comrades, and an odd spree, and a game of cards - and a coursing match coming on, and I promised a new greyhound from the city of Cork. I'll die in this place, the way I am. I'll be too much closed in.

Fardy: "Sure it mightn't be as bad as what you think."

Hyacinth: "Will you tell me, I ask you, what way can I undo it?"

Fardy: "What is it you are wanting to undo?"

Hyacinth: "Will you tell me what way can I get rid of my character?"

Fardy: "To get rid of it, is it?"

Hyacinth: "That is what I said. Aren't you after hearing the great character they are after putting on me?"

Fardy: "That is a good thing to have."

Hyacinth: "It is not. It's the worst in the world.





If I hadn't it I wouldn't be like a prize mangold at a show with every person praising me."

From this point on, the play consists of Hyacinth's futile attempts to show the residents of Cloon that he is not a perfect young man. He discusses with Fardy the best ways by which he can lose his character. Drunkenness and assault he decides are not bad enough. He determines to steal.

Fardy: "It's what I heard the old people saying there could be no worse crime than to steal a sheep -"

Hyacinth: "I'll steal a sheep - or a cow - or a horse - if that will leave me the way I was before."

Fardy: "It maybe in gaol it will leave you."

Hyacinth: "I don't care - I'll confess - I'll tell why I did it."

Fardy: "Well, if it is to steal a sheep you want, you won't have far to go."

Hyacinth: (Looking round wildly) "Where is it? I see no sheep."

Fardy: "Look around you."

With the help of Fardy, Hyacinth steals the carcass of the sheep hanging beside the entrance of the butcher shop. Fardy tells him to take it



to the ditch behind the church and throw it into the nettles. They have just succeeded in getting the carcass from the rack, and Hyacinth has barely made his escape, when Mrs. Delane comes in, very much excited. She has received a telegram from Dublin Castle to the Sergeant of Police. It is an order bidding the officer to seize all suspicious meat in Mr. Quirke's shop. There have been complaints from customers that the meat was not fresh when it was sold to them. Poor Mr. Quirke, realizing that he may be at fault, has visions of arrest, fines, or even the gaol. He immediately remembers the sheep and the fact that it was diseased when he bought the carcass from the widow woman at Kiltartan Cross. He looks at the rack where it has been hanging.

Mr. Quirke: "Where now is it? Well now I could have sworn that that sheep was hanging there on the rack when I went in -"

Mrs. Deland: "You must have put it in some other place."

Mr. Quirke: "I did not. There is no other place for me to put it. Is it gone blind I am, or is it not in it, it is?"

Suddenly he remembers that the Sergeant was at the shop that morning pretending to put up a notice. Mr. Quirke decides that he came to take away the sheep and use it for evidence



against him. He paces up and down the room excitedly and finally sits down and begins to weep. Hyacinth Halvey enters just then and when he hears all the commotion tells Mr. Quirke that he stole the sheep. Instead of arousing anger and perhaps being threatened with arrest, Hyacinth receives Mr. Quirke's gratitude.

Mr. Quirke: "You yourself that brought it away and hid it! I suppose it was coming in the train you got information about the message to the police!"

Hyacinth: "What now do you say to me?"

Mr. Quirke: "Say! I say I am as glad to hear what you said as if it was the Lord telling me I'd be in heaven this minute."

Hyacinth: "What are you going to do to me?"

Mr. Quirke: "Do, is it? (Grasps his hand) Any earthly thing you would wish me to do. I will do it."

Hyacinth: "I suppose you will tell -"

Mr. Quirke: (Embracing him) "The man that preserved me! Tell! It's I that will tell when all is quiet. It is I will give you the good name through the town!"

Hyacinth: (Shouting) "I tell you I took the sheep -"

Mr. Quirke: "You did, God reward you!"





The Sergeant enters just then and announced that the lecturer who was to appear had been unavoidably detained. He asks where he can find a man with education and wit and character enough to put up speaking on the platform on the minute.

Mr. Quirke and Mrs. Delane recommend Hyacinth Halvey and the Sergeant, delighted to find a lecturer, thrusts some papers into Hyacinth's hand.

Sergeant: (Looking at papers and thrusting them into

Hyacinth's hand) "You will find it quite easy. I will conduct you to the platform - these papers before you and a glass of water - that's settled. (Turns to go) Follow me on to the Courthouse in half an hour - Don't be late, Mrs. Delane. Mind, Quirke, you promised to come."

Mr. Quirke: (Rubbing his cheek) "I suppose so. I had best keep on good terms with him for the present.

Well, now, I had a great escape this day."

Mr. Quirke and Mrs. Delane go out and Fardy enters whistling. Hyacinth Halvey is sitting down, thoroughly disgusted with his vain attempts to get rid of his character. He tells Fardy of the lecture and of the Sergeant's determination to put him on the platform.

Hyacinth: (Giving a hoarse laugh) "Will you come and see me



on the platform - these in my hand - and I speaking - giving out advice." (Fardy whistles.) Why didn't you tell me, the time you advised me to steal a sheep, that in this town it would qualify a man to go preaching, and the priest in the chair looking on."

Fardy tells hyacinth that robbing a church would be considered a great crime, and Hyacinth asks at once for the location of the nearest church. A window has been taken out for repairs and Fardy hoists Hyacinth in through the opening.

Hyacinth: "I don't want riches. I'll give you all I will find if you will come and hoist me."

The robbery is committed and a little later some coins fall out of Fardy's pocket, arousing the suspicions of Miss Joyce, Mr. Quirke, Mrs. Deland, and the Sergeant. Poor Fardy, under a most merciless cross-examination, does his best to conceal the fact that Hyacinth gave him the coins. Because Fardy is a ne'er-do-well he is suspected of stealing. Finally he is accused of robbing a church.

Sergeant: (Seizing Fardy) "You have robbed the church."

Fardy: (Terrified) "I tell you I never did."

Sergeant: "How did you get this?"

Miss Joyce: "I suppose from the stranger?"

Fardy: "It was so."



Sergeant: "I suppose it was he robbed the church."

Fardy (Sobs) "You will not believe me if I say it."

Hyacinth comes in. Fardy creeps behind him.

Mrs. Delane: "It is time you to come, Mr. Halvey, and shut the mouth of this young schemer."

Mr. Quirke: "Robbery, he says."

Mrs. Delane: "Robbery of a church."

Sergeant: "He has had a bad name long enough. Let him go to a reformatory now."

Fardy: "Save me, save me! I'm a poor boy trying to knock out a way of living. I'll be destroyed if I go to a reformatory."

Hyacinth: "I'll save you easy enough."

Hyacinth tells the group repeatedly that it was he who robbed the church but none of them will believe him. He does his best to convince them, but all in vain. Finally poor Fardy begs so hard that the Sergeant agrees to let him go free for the sake of Halvey. The little group think that Hyacinth, because of his saintly character, has assumed the blame for Fardy.

Mr. Quirke: "The preserver of the poor! To save that poor boy he is going! To take the blame on himself he is going! To say he himself did the robbery he is going! To the gaol he is going! Doing all





that I tell you to save the character of a miserable slack lad that rose in poverty."

Sergeant: (Pressing his hand) "Mr. Halvey you have given us a lesson. To please you I will make no information against the boy."

Fardy: "I'm obliged to you, Mr. Halvey. You behaved very decent to me, very decent indeed. I'll never let a word be said against you if I live to be a hundred years."

As the play closes, Mr. Quirke puts Hyacinth in a chair and shouts that he will be carried through the streets "as an example and a blessing to the whole town." He calls to Fardy and the Sergeant to give a hand and they all lift the chair, with Halvey in it, wildly protesting.

Mr. Quirke: "Come along now to the Courthouse. Three cheers for Hyacinth Halvey! Hip! Hip! hoora!"

(Cheers are heard in the distance as the curtain drops.)

This is a most amusing and enjoyable little comedy. The bewildered Hyacinth Halvey seems very real, even though Lady Gregory is not famous for creating live characters. The dialogue is masterly, with its crispness, its cleverness, and its ready wit. It takes real ability, if not some genius,



to create, from an opinion or an absurd incident, an enduring little comedy like "Hyacinth Halvey." Dramatic critics are agreed that Lady Gregory was a master of short comedy.



V. A One-Act Tragedy.

The Gaol Gate

Although the writing of short comedies was Lady Gregory's specialty, she did not neglect tragedy. In her little play, "The Gaol Gate," there is deep poignancy and tender pathos, yet the play is short and concentrated. This is one of its outstanding merits. Morgan<sup>(1)</sup> says, "In Lady Gregory's full length tragedies their length is their weakness. Tragedies, by their very nature, are not amenable to lengthy treatment in the hands of Lady Gregory." In "The Gaol Gate" there is tragic intensity similar to that in Synge's "Riders to the Sea." The story is one based upon a tale which Lady Gregory heard from the peasants. She says:<sup>(2)</sup> "I was told a story some one heard of a man who had gone to welcome his brother coming out of gaol and heard he had died there before the gates had been opened for him."

The scene of the play is laid outside the gate of Galway gaol. The characters are Mary Cahel, an old country-woman, Mary Cushin, her son's wife, and the gatekeeper. The time is just before dawn.

Mary Cahel: "I am thinking we are come to our

(1) Morgan, A.E.: Tendencies of Modern English Drama. Constable and Co. Ltd. Dublin. p. 156.

(2) Lady Gregory: Seven Short Plays. C.P. Putnam's Sons, p. 301.





journey's end and that this should be the gate of the gaol."

Mary Cushin: "It is certain it could be no other place. There was surely never in the world such a terrible great height of a wall."

Mary Cahel: "He that was used to the mountains to be closed up inside of that! What call had he to go moonlighting or to bring himself into danger at all?"

Mary Cushin: "It is no wonder a man to grow faint-hearted and he shut away from the light. I never would wonder at all at anything he might be driven to say."

Mary Cahel: "There were good men were gaoled before him never gave in to anyone at all. It is what I am thinking, Mary, he might not have done what they say."

The two women talk of the crime which was committed in their little village. A man was shot, and Denis Cahel was being held as a witness since his footmarks were found near the scene of the crime. The word had been sent out that he had informed on his two companions and that the men had been arrested. The mother and wife, beside themselves with grief and with fear that Denis was a coward and an informer, had made the long journey to see him in the gaol.



Mary Cushin: "If he did give their names up itself there was maybe no wrong in it at all. Sure it's known to all the village it was Terry that fired the shot. It was Pat Ruane that tempted them on account of some vengeance of his own. Every creature knows my poor Denis never handled a gun in his life."

As the two women wait for the gates to be opened, Mary Cahel takes from under her cloak a long blue envelope. It has not been opened, since neither of them can read. There is much pathos in this little speech of the mother:

Mary Cahel: "I wish we could know what is in the letter they are after sending us through the post. Isn't it a great pity for the two of us to be without learning at all."

In the gray dawn they stand waiting patiently to show the letter to the gatekeeper.

Mary Cushin: "I suppose it is all we have to do so to stop here for the opening of the door. It's a terrible long road from Slieve Echtge we were travelling the whole of the night."



The gate is opened and the Gatekeeper is seen with a lantern in his hand.

Gatekeeper: "What are you doing here women? It's no place to be spending the night time."

Mary Cahel: "It is to speak with my son I am asking, that is gaoled these eight weeks and a day."

Gatekeeper: "If you have no order to visit him it's as good for you to go away home."

Mary Cahel: "I got this letter ere yesterday. It might be giving me leave."

The Gatekeeper opens and reads the letter which was posted several days previously.

Gatekeeper: "You poor unfortunate women, don't you know Denis Cahel is dead? You'd a right to come this time yesterday if you wished any last word at all."

The two women, overwhelmed with grief, kneel down and cry out in their sorrow: "God and His Mother protect us and have mercy on Denis' soul! There is lasting kindness in Heaven when no kindness is found upon earth. There will surely be mercy found for him and not the hard judgment of men."

Their overwhelming grief over the death of Denis is easier for them to bear than the thought that he died an informer, with his name dishonored. They ask for his body and are told that





he was hanged and that his body was buried in the common field belonging to the gaol. It is then that the climax of the play is reached and the following speech, made by the wife, is not surpassed in its tragic intensity, even by Synge.

Mary Cushin: "A man that was hanged! O Denis was it they that made an end of you and not the great God at all? His curse and my own curse upon them that did not let you die on the pillow! The curse of God be fulfilled that was on them before they were born. My curse upon them that brought harm on you, and on Terry Fury that fired the shot!"

Mary Cahel: "And the other boys, did they hang them along with him, Terry Fury and Pat Duane that were brought from Daire-caol?"

Gatekeeper: "They did not, but set them free twelve hours ago. It is likely you may have passed them in the night time."

Mary Cushin: "Set free is it? And Denis made an end of? What justice is in the world at all?"

Gatekeeper: "He was taken near the house. They knew his footmark. There was no witness given against the rest worth while."



Mary Cahel: "Then the sergeant was lying and the people were lying when they said Denis Cahel had informed in the gaol?"

Gatekeeper: "I have no time to be stopping here talking. The judge got no evidence and the law set them free."

At these words the mother's grief turns to joy, for she knows that her son died rather than inform against his neighbors.

Mary Cahel: (holding out her hands) "Are there any people in the streets at all till I call on them to come hither? Did they ever hear in Galway such a thing to be done, a man to die for his neighbor? It was Denis Cahel from Daire-caol that died in the place of his neighbor. One word to the judge and Denis was free. They offered him all sorts of riches. They brought him drink in the gaol, and gold, to swear away the life of his neighbor!"

As the play closes, the aged mother walks slowly off the stage followed by Mary Cushin. She pauses a moment for these final words:

Mary Cahel: "I to stoop on a stick through half a hundred years, I will never be tired with praising! Come hither, Mary



Cushin, till we shout it through the  
roads, Denis Cahel died for his neighbor."

CURTAIN

The emotions of the audience are deeply roused by the tender pathos of this little play. The elements of doubt, uncertainty, pity, and helplessness combined in it make it, as Malone<sup>(1)</sup> says: "One of the great tragic experiences of the theater today." Lady Gregory has created, in Mary Cahel, the mother, one of her most enduring characters. She is typical of the simple Irish peasant woman whom Lady Gregory knew and loved so well. "The Gaol Gate" holds an enduring place in the Abbey Theater as a masterpiece of short tragedy.

(1) Malone, Andrew: The Irish Drama. Charles Scribner's Sons Company, -p. 159.





## VI. The Folk-History Plays

Lady Gregory was well known for her translations of Irish folk tales long before she became interested in the Abbey Theater. Her "Kiltartan History," written from folk tales told by her neighbors, was received as a valuable contribution to Irish literature. Lynd<sup>(1)</sup> says: "She has kept alive the traditions of Ireland." In writing her folk history plays Lady Gregory felt that she was definitely experimenting, and her own judgment on her experimentation was sound. She says, in speaking of the circumstances which led her to try historical drama instead of peasant comedy: "Perhaps I ought to have written nothing but these short comedies, but desire for experiment is like fire in the blood."<sup>(2)</sup> Her folk history plays seem more like comedies in a historical setting than real historical dramas. Her imitations of the peasant speech in the old stories seems absurd, grotesque, and unreal. However, the plays possess positive literary value and have a special interest for students of Irish legendary character and dialogue. They are better suited to study than to the stage, and they were never tried in this country. They are not lacking in effective incident, either serious or comic, and occasionally they thrill with passion-

(1) Lynd, Robert: Old and New Masters. Charles Scribners Sons Co., p. 178.

(2) Boyd, Ernest A: Contemporary Drama Of Ireland. Little, Brown and Co., p. 137.



ate and eloquent emotion, but for the most part they are exceedingly loose and feeble in construction and are often grossly extravagant in design. Most of them are weak in characterization, since kings and peasants are cast in much the same mould and speak in much the same fashion. The characters are apt to be a reflection of Lady Gregory herself, who has imaginative sentiment and an intimate knowledge of Irish character as a whole, yet she lacks the power of individual creation. "The talk of her puppets is racy of Irish soil and atmosphere" says The Nation. "It contains vigorous poetic imagery, some pathos, much humor, yet it lacks dramatic interest."<sup>(1)</sup>

#### The White Cockade

The theme of this play is the flight of King James the Second after the battle of the Boyne. In her notes Lady Gregory says that she got the information for this play from some poems which she had taken down in Irish from the country people. In one of the poems was a line which said: "My heart leaps up with my bright Stuart." She had never heard any songs or poems in Galway in praise of the Stuarts so she went into the peasant cottages and gathered information from the old folks there. She found them scornful indeed of any songs or poems of praise. James the Second, they said, was a

(1) The Nation - June 6, 1912. p. 572.



coward who refused to go into the thick of the battle. The song, "The White Cockade," which contained the line of praise, was a song used by the followers of the stuart. However, there was much praise for Patrick Sarsfield, Earl of Lucan, a general under James. From these fragmentary notes Lady Gregory wrote "The White Cockade." She says: "When my 'White Cockade' was first produced I was pleased to hear that J. M. Synge had said my method had made the writing of historical drama again possible."<sup>(1)</sup>

The scene of the first act is an inn kitchen at Duncannon. The principal characters in this act are Matt and Mary Kelleher, (the innkeepers), Owen, their son, and a poor lady. Owen is lying on the floor playing jackstones. Mrs. Kelleher is rubbing a bit of meat. A barrel stands beside her.

Mrs. Kelleher: "Leave playing jackstones, Owen, and give me a hand salting the meat."

Owen: "There is time enough. Sure it's not today it is wanted."

Mrs. Kelleher: "What's put off till harvest is put off forever. It's best to catch a pig by the leg when you get her. The French ships might be going before we have the

(1) Lady Gregory: Irish Folk History Plays. p. 194.





barrels ready and some other might get the profit."

Owen: "The ship didn't get orders yet from King James. The sailors were not sure was it to Dublin he would bid them go, or to some other place. It is time for us to be hearing news of him. I have a mind to ask it."

Owen tells his mother that he would like to join the army of King James. His mother reprimands him severely and says he had better be minding his work at home. King James, she says, should be able to fight his own battles. As she talks, she looks out of the door and sees the "poor lady" coming down the road. She is a partially mad creature who wanders about the country singing songs in praise of the Stuarts.

Mrs. Kelleher (looking out of the door) "It is the poor lady. She wasn't here this good while. It is a pity she to have gone spending all for the king the way she did, and to gain beggary and misery ever after."

The old lady comes in. She is half blind and wears ragged clothes that had once been handsome.

Mrs. Kelleher: "You are welcome, my poor Lady Dereen."



Lady:

"I thank you Mary Kelleher. I have always found a welcome in this house and a shelter from the heat and rain. I have had grest losses but now I will have great gains. I lost all through Charles. I will get back all through James. My eyes are tired watching for the sun to rise in the east. The sun of our success is rising at last!"

Mrs. Kelleher gives her a few white feathers, left from plucking a duck. Lady Dereen takes them and makes a cockade for her hair. As she fastens the feathers together with shaking hands she talks of King James and of the prosperity he will bring to all. She urges Owen to put a white cockade in his hair and go out to fight for King James. Matt Kelleher comes in with a bag of salt for the meat. He is excited over the news of the battle of the Boyne. Rumor has it that the brave King James and Sarsfield have won. Lady Dereen becomes hysterical with excitement. Matt gets wine from the cellar and drinks copiously to the health of the king. As the first act closes Matt is walking crockedly about, kneeling, curtsying, and talking thickly of James.

Matt:

"I will kneel - no, I will not."

(stumbles and kneels) There, I did now in spite of myself. Here, Mary,



help me up again."

Mrs. Kelleher: "Stop where you are, Kelleher, and be  
ashamed of yourself. Where wine goes  
in, wit goes out."

Mrs. Kelleher is a little skeptical over the outcome of the  
battle. She prefers not to put her trust in rumor.

Mrs. Kelleher: "Maybe he was not the winner after all.  
It's often we heard news from Ross  
that wouldn't be true after."

Matt: "Why wouldn't he win? He has the  
prayers of the people with him."

Lady: "He has God with him."

Owen: "He has Sarsfield with him."

Lady: "Oh who will go to the king? Who will  
go for news of the king?"

Owen: "I will go."

Lady: "Yes, go, go! Here, take these to give  
to the king's men. (She gives him the  
cockade.)"

Owen: "I will go now. I delayed long enough.  
I wish I had gone in time for the  
fighting."

As the first act ends, all are singing and drinking toasts  
to the king.

The first scene of the second act is King James'





camp in a wood. The principal characters are James, Sarsfield, Owen, and Carter. Scene II is laid at the inn and the characters are Matt and Owen Kelleher, Lady Dereen, and the soldiers of William of Orange.

At the beginning of Act II James is sitting on a camp stool in a wood. Sarsfield and Carter stand beside him. Sarsfield is pointing with his sword to a map on the ground.

Sarsfield: "If your Majesty will look at the plan I have marked on this map you will see how we can make up for the defeat of the Boyne. The news we had of William's march makes it very simple. He will be in our hands by morning. You know what we have to do tonight. Tomorrow we shall be dictating terms from Limerick."

James: "Yes, yes, you told me all that. I wonder if this wood is quite safe."  
(looks around) I hope the bridge we crossed that last little river by has been broken so that no one can follow us."

Sarsfield: "Kilkenny must be strengthened too. Waterford is loyal. Munster and



Connacht are safe. Our success will give back Dublin. In half an hour our horses will be rested. We must be at Clonmel before midnight."

James: "But there is a troupe of William's men somewhere about. We might fall into their hands."

Sarsfield: "They are in small divisions. We and our few men will be more than a match for them."

James: "Of course, of course; but we must not risk our lives."

Carter: "Not a doubt of it! The king's life must not be put in danger."

Sarsfield: "Danger! Who says that? Who said it at the Boyne? Was it you drove the king from the battle? Bad advisers! Bad advisers! He who says 'danger' is a bad adviser."

Carter: "I did nothing. It was his Majesty's own doing."

James: "Yes, yes of course. I am more than a soldier. I have the whole kingdom to think of. I suppose I must carry out this plan of surprise."

Sarsfield: "That is right, sir. Carry it out and the Boyne will be forgotten."

James: "Is that some noise?"



Sarsfield: "It is but the trampling of our own horses."

James: "Just go, Sarsfield, and see to the breaking of that bridge. If we are caught here by those murderous Dutch, your plans will be ended with a rope or a scaffold."

Sarsfield: "I will send orders on to Clonmel. The Boyne will be forgotten - forgotten."

After Sarsfield has left, Carter and King James, who are both cowardly at heart, decide that they will no longer take orders from Sarsfield. They fear a surprise attack from William of Orange, and they think only of escape for themselves.

James: "I would prefer to be elsewhere. It is all very well for those who have a taste for fighting. I had it once myself - when I was a boy. But it has gone from me now with the taste for green apples."

Carter: "Not a doubt of it."

James: "A king's life does not belong to himself."

Carter: "He must not let it be taken."

James: "Now if we had come to the sea-"

Carter: "We would be handy to it."

James: "If there were a French ship -"

Carter: "And a fair wind"

James: "We might - what is that?"





Owen's voice is heard singing "The White Cockade."

Carter: "It is a friend - he is singing 'The  
White Cockade.'"

Owen enters, singing. He tells the two men that he is looking for news of King James. The people are greatly alarmed over the rumor that the king was defeated at the battle of the Boyne. James does not make himself known to Owen, but admits the defeat and asks what has been heard. Owen tells of seeing some of William's troops on the way to the wood. They were giving out word that William had gained the day, that King James was running, and that if they got him they would give his legs a rest for a while. This news puts the king into a panic of fear.

James: "Heavens! What a terrible threat!"

Carter: "Terrible indeed! Is there no place  
where we could be safe?"

Owen: "If you belong to King James you would  
be safe where I come from, and that is  
the inn at the harbour of Duncannon."

James: "The harbour! Do many ships come in  
there?"

Owen: "There do not. But there is one in it  
presently."

James: "An English ship?"

Owen: "It is not, but a ship from France. But



if it is itself it is not long it will be in it. It will be sailing at sunrise. There will be a boat coming from it after midnight for the meat my mother has them promised."

James: "I must go to Duncannon! Look here, boy, would it be safe if I - if the king himself were to go there tonight?"

Owen: "Now that he is down - I think there is not one in the place but would carry a hurt dog if it belonged to King James."

James: "But tell me - I only say if the king should come and should be seen by anyone - is there any chance he would be known?"

Owen: "Every chance. Sure he is well known by the song."

James (To Carter) "It will be safer not to go till after dark. We must go quite quietly - we must leave our men and horses at a distance. You must keep the inn clear, boy. You must keep the French boat till I come - till the king comes. He will knock at the door before midnight."

Owen: "Believe me he will get a good welcome. I



may as well be going now to make all ready."

James: "That was a good chance. We can go on board at once and slip away to France. I have done with this detestable Ireland."

Carter: "And I."

Scene II of Act II is at the inn in Duncannon. It is night and candles are burning. Owen comes in and tells the news of King James' defeat at Boyne.

Mrs. Kelleher: "The king beaten! Sure they said first he had won. Well, the bottom comes out of every riddle at last."

Matt: "I had it in my mind there was some great misfortune coming upon us. I was trying to hearten myself through the whole of the morning. I give you my word, now, I am as sorry as if there was one dead belonging to me."

Lady Dereen: "Where were the people that were wise and learned? Where were the troops readying their spears? Where are they till they smooth out this knot for me? (Takes Owen by the shoulders) Why did not the hills fall upon the traitors? Why did





not the rivers rise against them?"

Owen tells them that the king is coming to the inn to seek refuge and that he will arrive before midnight. Mrs. Kelleher and Owen hurry about making preparations. Matt gets good wine from the cellar and Mrs. Kelleher prepares food. Suddenly a trampling of horses is heard.

Matt: "What is that? Is it the king that is coming?"

Owen: "It is not, but King William's men that are looking for the king."

They try to hide the food, as the soldiers open the door and enter. They demand food and lodging and state that they are watching the pier for the escaping king. As they are feasting and drinking James arrives with Sarsfield and Carter.

The Williamites recognize the white cockade and attempt to discover whether King James is in the party. Matt, who has been drinking too much wine, asks the men with the white cockades which one is James - King James whom they were expecting that night. The Williamites, receiving this information, seize the entire party of King James as prisoners.

They decide to shoot the king at once but Sarsfield protects him, begs for his life, and finally persuades the Williamites to turn traitor to their king and join the party of James. As the second act closes, the Williamites have pledged allegiance to James.



First Williamite: "We will follow you! We will send our comrades away when they come, or we will turn them to you!"

Second Williamite: "We will fight for you five times better than ever we fought for the Dutchman. We will not let so much as a scratch on one belonging to you - even that lean-jawed little priest at the end of the table." (Points at James)

Sarsfield (Rising): "That is right. I knew you were good Irishmen. Now, we must set out for Clonmel.

James: "No, no! We cannot go. We must wait for the men from the French ship."

Suddenly the sound of marching and singing is heard outside the door. Those inside the inn know that a troop of Williamites is coming to join them.

First Williamite: "It is the Newry troop."

Owen (bolting the door and putting his back to it) "They must not see the king."

Sarsfield: (Drawing his sword and going before James) "We will cut our way through them."

Mrs. Kelleher: (Pushing back dresser and opening a door) "It is a poor mouse that wouldn't have two doors to its hole! (She pushes James



and Carter in. Sarsfield stands at it)  
"Go in now. When all is quiet you can  
get through to the pier."

Matt and Owen hold the door fast as the Williamite captain  
bangs at it from the outside. When James and Carter are safely  
hidden Mrs. Kelleher pushes the dresser back in place, snuffs  
out all the candles and opens the door.

Captain: "Who is here?"

Matt: "Not a one in the world, Captain, but  
myself and herself and the son I have,  
and a few men of King William's army."

First Williamite: "We are here, sir, according to orders.  
We are watching the pier."

Captain: "Strike a light! What is going on here?  
Have you heard any news of King James?"

First Williamite: "Great news. He was seen to the east -  
up in the wood.

Captain: "We must follow him at once."

The scene of the final act, Act III, is on the pier at  
Duncannon that same night. James and Carter appear first and  
are talking together:

James: "Upon my word, I am as glad to escape  
from that dark cellar as I was to get  
into it an hour ago. The long and





short of it is, it will not be my fault if I spend another night in this abominable island."

The king tells Carter that he fears Sarsfield and wishes to escape from him and from the responsibilities placed upon him by a trusting people. As a craven runaway and a despicable coward he is fairly clearly drawn by Lady Gregory. He tells Carter that he plans to force the French sailors to take him on shipboard with the cargo. James realizes that Sarsfield knows of his hiding place in the cellar and will try to find him soon and make plans for a new attack on the Dutch. The French sailors refuse to take James aboard until they have finished loading their cargo. As he is arguing with them Sarsfield comes.

Sarsfield: "All is well, sir. Our men are coming in fast. There are two hundred of them to the west of the harbor. We are late for the surprise - that chance is gone; but we can bring good help to hearten Limerick. The king's presence will bring out the white cockade like rush cotton over the bogs."

James: "Yes, yes! Very good, very good."

Sarsfield: "Are you ready, sir?"

James: "Oh yes, ready, very ready - to leave this place."



Sarsfield: "This way, sir, this way!"

James: "I know the way; but I have left my papers - papers of importance - in that cellar. I must go back and get them."

He goes out left; Sarsfield right. Matt, Owen, and Mrs. Kelleher come in. Owen has finally decided to join the army of James. His mother gives him her blessing and Matt presents his son with his grandfather's belt and pistols. As they talk, the sailors come in from the left rolling a very large barrel. Matt asks them for a drink of French wine before it leaves the country. The sailors say that they have had orders from the king not to open the barrel. Carter stands by and refuses to let Owen or Matt approach. He says it is a bacon barrel. Finally one of the Williamites decides that all of them should find out whether it is wine or not, and if it is wine, a toast should be drunk to the king. As the soldiers tilt the barrel a muffled groan is heard inside. They draw bayonets while one of the soldiers knocks the head off the barrel. Sarsfield enters just in time to help James from his hiding place and to discover his cowardly plans.

James: "I have business in France. You may stay here, General Sarsfield, if you will. But I will lead you no longer. I will fight no more for these cowardly Irish. You must shift for yourselves."



I will shift for myself."

He goes out, followed by the sailors. Owen tears off his white cockade and throws it on the ground. The poor lady enters moaning.

Lady (Turning to face the other way) "Where is the sun? I am tired of looking for it in the east, it may be in the west it will rise tomorrow!"

Mrs. Kelleher: "Gone is he?" My joy be with him, and glass legs under him! Well, an empty house is better than a bad tenant."

Sarsfield: "Gone - gone - he is gone - he betrayed me - he called me from the battle - he lost me my great name - he betrayed Ireland. Who is he? A king or what? (He pulls feathers one by one from cockade.) King or knave - soldier - sailor - tinker - tailor - beggarman - thief. (Pulls out last feather) Thief, that is it,- thief. He has stolen our good name; he has stolen our faith; he has stolen the pin that held loyalty to royalty!" A thief - a fox - a fox of trickery! (He sits down trembling.)

The last act closes soon after this very dramatic speech, and





it finds Sarsfield buckling on his sword belt - going out to battle still loyal to the king.

Sarsfield: "Why, why? Who can say? What is holding me? Habit, custom. What is it the priests say? - the cloud of witnesses. Maybe the call of some old angry father of mine that fought two thousand years ago for a bad master! (He stands up) Well, good-bye, good-bye!"

Lady: "Is not that a very foolish man to go on fighting for a dead king? Fighting for a dead king - ha! ha! ha! Poor Patrick Sarsfield is very, very mad!"

CURTAIN

"The White Cockade" is a fair example of the other folk history plays written by Lady Gregory. They show an accurate knowledge of the history of the times, and most of them abound with keen and brilliant political satire, yet they lack the dramatic force and strong characterization which mark the truly great historical dramas. They were never as popular with audiences as the merry one-act peasant comedies which gave Lady Gregory her unique and enduring place in the world of drama.



### Conclusion

Many years have passed since the first performance of the Abbey Players was given in the Ancient Concert Rooms at Dublin. The simple peasant comedies are no longer being written, for the trend of modern Irish playwrights is toward the dramas of realism. But to Lady Augusta Gregory, indomitable pioneer of the Abbey, goes the grateful tribute of literary Ireland, for it was she who helped to bring a national drama to her native country. Throughout the earlier years of doubt and discouragement she held fast to her belief in the future of the Irish drama. Her hopes have been realized, and these words, once spoken by her, have come true:(1)

"But Ireland cannot be kept as a sampler upon the wall. It has refused to be cut off from the creative work of the intellect, and other countries, creating literature, have claimed her as of their kin."

(1) Gregory, Lady Augusta - Our Irish Theater. n. 255.  
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